

UNIVERSITY UMC OF REDLANDS, CA
“THIS IS WHAT I CAME OUT TO DO”

Mark 1:29-39¹

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

February 4th, 2024

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹ He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed by demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴ And he cured many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons, and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” ³⁸ He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also, for that is what I came out to do.” ³⁹ And he went throughout all Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

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Introduction.

Two Sundays ago, we had our retreat as a church to adjust our vision and more clearly define our mission to remain as a relevant church for our community. And We learned that our church has enough energy to continue serving our God and our Community.

Last Sunday we had the visit of our superintendent to consecrate together the audio/visual equipment to be more effective in our outreach to brothers and sisters who cannot attend services; and why not reach more people through technology?

Today's text challenges us to take Jesus as a model of mission, and there are two things that should draw our attention: 1. His commitment to the people and 2. Their dependence on God, the Father.

After being baptized, tempted, calling four disciples, and performing an act of exorcism, Jesus encounters the illness of Peter's mother-in-law.

We move from the context of the synagogue, symbol, and place of theological, religious, and traditional authority (Mark 1:21-28), to one of community, intimacy, comfort as a "house," a "home."

It was in the house that God's wonders and blessings to His people were recited throughout their history in an accessible and effortless way.

It is in this context of experiential faith that Jesus performs the second miracle of healing and deliverance according to Mark's narrative. Jesus lifts Peter's mother-in-law and heals her of a terminal fever.

The text says that Peter's mother-in-law, when she got up, served them. Her response to such an act of love, compassion, and mercy was to serve, not because she was expected to do so because she was a woman, but because she was moved by mercy and rejoiced in doing so.

... the whole city was gathered around the door.

What a stir Jesus made! It had everyone in an uproar. And why not? If there is one thing that stands out, it is His infinite Mercy.

Everyone was looking for him and we did not find a single refusal, not the slightest condition to address the pleas of the people who came to look for him for the most diverse reasons.

It is this absolute willingness to serve others that we must first observe to have him as an example.

We asked ourselves, what would we do with such a capacity?

Isn't it something that we are asking for in one way or another?

What people do we know who have offices where patients are constantly coming in? In our country this is quite common in medical consultations.

What do most of them do? They amass a small fortune, because there are very few who decide to have a differentiated rate in favor of the poorest...

We know several who pocket 400 to 500 dollars a day, which makes about 10,000 a month, which is a real fortune in our country.

And Jesus? He did not charge anything. But there is something else that distinguishes him from our professionals: he expels demons, so we would say that he is a doctor of bodies and souls.

When he casts out a demon, he does not let him speak, because they recognize him. What does this mean? What does it have? to be recognized? Who cares? To Jesus. Why?

We can speculate that the Lord cannot refuse to heal out of mercy, Because He loves us so much. He cannot refuse, but he would gladly do so, if it would prevent the demons from recognizing him and exposing him.

Why doesn't He want the demons to talk about Him? This is a constant in the Gospel account according to Mark. Jesus heals. Heals, no matter the ailment, defying every physical, medical, or spiritual law.

It is obvious that for Him there are no limits, however who He is something we must discover for ourselves or because of His teachings, not by testimony of demons.

"Everyone is looking for you." He said to them, "Let us go elsewhere, to the neighboring villages, so that I may preach there also; for that is why I have come."

There is something else that makes him completely different from any of our professionals, not only does he defy natural laws, but he separates himself from people without seeking compensation or distinction of any kind.

He does not want honors, or mentions, or protocols, but can barely stealthily turn away from the crowd, without anyone knowing where he is going, and when he is alone, he prays, prays intensely.

He does not show any particular interest in knowing how many cures he has performed, how many sick people there were, and how many are missing in each village. He also does not have a list of the notable people he is served. He simply attends to every case that is presented to him, without making distinctions or asking for any identification.

... for that is what I came out to do.

When he retires to pray, he does not return with the purpose of continuing where he left off but wants to go elsewhere.

Because he wants to go and preach to other people, because that is what he came out for.

The Lord heals, because He is merciful, but He did not go out to heal, but, as He says, to preach. This is what people should hear, not the stories of demons, who reproach Him for casting them out.

"Everyone is looking for you." He said to them, "Let us go elsewhere, to the neighboring villages, so that I may preach there also; for that is why I have come."

Christ has power over demons, but He does not want to instill fear or admiration by His power, but to reveal to us the Father who has sent Him to save us from lies, deceit, darkness, and death.

The Lord wants us to hear and follow His command, which is a command of love, because it is only love that will make our Salvation possible.

We must love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves to be saved. It is love, not fear, that will save us.

But there is something else...

The Lord has not sold out to cure us of all ills, which does not mean that He will not do so, when necessary, to whom He asks, as in fact He does with many of that crowd that gathered.

The Lord has come to give us Eternal Life, which is beyond all evil, all infirmity, all trouble, all anguish and all need; He has come to give us the Holy Spirit and He will give it to anyone who asks Him, and this has nothing to do with the healing of anything, because it is much beyond.

The ills we have are temporary and we can bear them with solidarity and love. And it is this love that will make us attain Eternal Life, which is Good above all Good.

The Kingdom of God is at hand precisely because our Salvation is possible because of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has fulfilled the Mission entrusted to Him by the Father, so we only must spend this sigh that lasts the present life, loving one another, to reach Eternal Life.

This is what we need to hear and understand. This is what we need to focus on and persevere.

Conclusion

"Everyone is looking for you." He said to them, "Let us go elsewhere, to the neighboring villages, so that I may preach there also; for that is why I have come."

I think we already have a clearer idea of who we are as a local church, we already know what we want for this beautiful community of faith, we refuse to close our doors, and even though we are few and our resources are getting down, and even if we have to reduce the time of a pastor's service with us... we have to find a way to continue to be useful and relevant in the kingdom of God.

So let us heed what the text tells us this morning:

Let us use the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ to fulfill God's mission, that is, let us not be afraid to proclaim healing and to cast out demons that we encounter in our path.

Let us pray, prayer is a very great and enormously powerful resource that God has given us to fulfill the mission, to rebuke demons and to heal the diseases of our people.

Let us be willing to go to other towns near our church. In other words, let us use the resources we have at hand to reach more people and make them disciples of Jesus.

The key is our commitment.

Love.